

Circuit Breakers

JOHN TRAYNA



Etra Synthesizer has recently made available the Video Repositioner. Selling for \$6,800, Rutt's Video Repositioner is a unique little "black-box" device that is specifically designed for reconstructing the composition of live and/or prerecorded frames of video when dealing with more than one source. So far, it has evoked positive reaction from major production houses. EUE Screen Gems and one of the tv networks have already purchased the Repositioner while broadcast stations from around the country have begun placing orders.

The Video Repositioner is small in size. Designed for easy rack-mounting, it is 19 inches wide and only 3 1/2 inches high by 15 inches deep. It functions in a similar manner to the standard pulse-cross monitor by horizontally and vertically repositioning incoming sync to be outputted to the downstream production chain. The device requires time-base corrected or processed video to work and will not accept helical or helical-gen-loc quality video. Vertical repositioning is accomplished one line at a time and horizontal repositioning is at a rate of 1X subcarrier. It performs by stripping the original sync and re-inserts properly re-timed sync information.

THE VIDEO REPOSITIONER: A New Tool for TV Producers

There has always been a drive to bring video closer to film in production technique and postproduction capabilities. Traditionally, the primary roadblock in video has come with "in the can" or prerecorded imagery. Although technology has long provided video with the capability of mixing prerecorded tapes and treating them as live sources, the composition of the prerecorded image has remained predominantly sacro sanct and unchangeable.

It was with the introduction of digital technology that innovators first began readjusting the composi-

tion of prerecorded images. Field/frame-store and frame-compression devices represented the first such attempts. Even some of the new digital switchers allow unique combining of several nonsynchronous sources. In all cases, the prerecorded images are dealt with on a generally holistic level and it has been impossible to reconstruct the composition of elements within the frame of one or more prerecorded sources of video. In film, the problem has long been remedied by the optical printing process, leaving such goals in video to be accomplished by present tense or "real-time" production techniques.

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John Trayna is teaching courses in video production and video art at New York University and Cooper Union.

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Video-graphy

The device accepts standard composite video and will provide horizontal and vertical drives, subcarrier, composite blanking, composite sync, burst flag, and reference video. There is both a bypass switch and an auto-bypass feature that takes effect whenever the repositioner is powered down.

The actual repositioning of video is accomplished through four buttons: north, south, east and west. There is a digital L.E.D. readout indicating how far out of center images have been moved. There is also an onboard memory so that the operator can instantly return to a preset position. Movements are accomplished by selecting the desired direction and pushing the appropriate button. Press once to move a single step or hold the button for continuous movement. The Repositioner can even create horizontal pans or traveling mat effects similar to those accomplished in film through the use of optical printers. The electronics are strictly "state of the art." Completely solid state, the unit employs TTL and C-MOS logic with discrete and IC processing or video. All pots and switches are hermetically sealed, thus eliminating static and noise problems resulting from "dirty pots." There is instantaneous warm-up as well as automatic switchover to bypass whenever power is lost.

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It should be emphasized that whenever the Video Repositioner is used, it affects the entire frame of video. When images within a given picture are moved, the edges move into view. The operator may then key or insert the repositioned image into a background and mask the edges. It's also important to differentiate the Repositioner from field and frame storage devices because it will not store video. Movement is accomplished by altering the phase of the equipment being used to generate or playback the image. Moreover, the Video Repositioner represents as little as one-tenth the cost of such devices.

A good example of how the Repositioner may be used can be seen in a Ford Motor Company commercial recently shot at EUE Screen Gems in New York City. The commercial called for a long pull-back of the camera in order to provide a full wide side perspective of the automobile. In doing so, however, the producers found that the stage being used to shoot the commercial was not quite tall enough so that when the camera was pulled back, the top of the curtain was revealed. Rather than take the time and cost to completely restage the commercial, the

producers simply performed a soft-wipe and repositioned a section of the curtain to re-insert it at the top of the screen in the shots in question.

Some observers of the video scene feel that the Repositioner will expand the horizons of libraries of already existing video footage. The Repositioner will allow the addition of new pictures or graphics onto the older images. This could make it an ideal piece of hardware in the industrial, educational and scientific markets.

The Video Repositioner is currently available from Educational Electronics, Hollywood, Cal.; Sound Systems, Inc., Long Island, N.Y., and directly from Rutt Electrophysics, New York City. There is a sixty-day waiting period for delivery. I have little doubt that this device can have a major effect on contemporary production hardware and techniques. As such, it deserves serious consideration by producers and engineers alike.

Comments, questions, and information about new hardware are welcome and should be addressed to John Trayna, Videography, 750 Third Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

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